

# CASA

## Casa Avian Support Alliance

## CASA Sponsors Receive Comments from Forest Department on Proposal

Comments and questions developed by the Ministry of Natural Resources, Forest Department, in response to the rehabilitation and release center proposal, were received by the CASA sponsors on May 25, 2006. The letter prepared by Mr. Wilber Sabido, Chief Forest Officer, reflected a very thorough and careful review by members of the Forest Department Staff and related stakeholders. The review posed numerous questions regarding the operation of the ex-situ conservation facility as well as inquiry regarding the protocols that would steer the day-to-day operation. Mr. Sabido commended the initiative and voiced support for the undertaking, while underscoring the need to address specific matters and issues raised by the proposal. The letter also identified Mr. George Hanson, Wildlife Officer, as the future point of contact regarding the comments, and the continuing dialogue regarding the development of CASA.

The 'Response to Comments' document, some 42-pages, including preliminary drawing of the facility layout and details of both the intermediary Rehabilitation Building

and the Quarantine/Nursery – Evaluation/Treatment Building was delivered electronically to the Forest Department on June 15, 2006. The "Response" underscores the recognition that CASA would be assisting and augmenting the programs and work of the Forest Department in their role as the legally mandated agency responsible for the conservation of the nation's biodiversity. CASA looks forward to a long partnering relationship with the Forest Department and its staff.

We wish to thank all of those people who have so graciously given of their time in assisting us in the preparation of that document, and for the letters voicing their support of the CASA initiative - Dr. Debra Scheenstra, DVM, avian veterinarian, Ms. Bonnie Zimmerman, Deputy Director, Project Bird Watch, Indonesia, Karen Wilson, Chief Executive Officer, Melanie Piazza, Director of Animal Care and Alison Hermance of Wild Care – Wildlife Rehabilitation, and Dr. Gary Richter, DVM, MS, Montclair Veterinary Hospital, and Ms. Lee Richter, Executive Director, Montclair Veterinary Hospital Pet and Wildlife Fund.

On May 15, it was learned from Mr. George Hanson that he is currently involved with Mr. Victor Gongora, Director of Animal Health, and Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) in developing procedures and protocols to address the threat of avian influenza (H5N1). Mr. Hanson mentioned the possibility of CASA involvement in that program.

An additional topic discussed with Mr. Hanson was the development of specific protocols and means for CASA to receive confiscated avian wildlife that had been illegally obtained. These birds, owing to their market value, would almost certainly be CITES listed species, and are likely to include Psittacidae (parrots), Accipitridae (hawks, kites and eagles), and Falconidae (caracaras and falcons), among others. Currently, there is no rescue facility in Belize capable of accommodating either confiscated avian wildlife, or avifauna recovered from the bush in need of rehabilitation from illness or injury.

### Inside this issue:

<i>MVHP&amp;WF to Provide Umbrella for Non-profit Status</i>	2
<i>Dr. Deb visits CASA in April, 2005</i>	2
<i>CASA to assist with propagation of mahogany seedlings</i>	2
<i>Birding Guide Jaime Garcia</i>	3
<i>WildCare— a Model and Mentor</i>	3
<i>Wildlife Biologists to visit in July</i>	3
<i>CDCB Attends BTIA Workshop</i>	3

### Special Points of Interest:

- Casa del Caballo Blanco listed by Rainforest Alliance—visit [http://ecotourism.org/en/casa\\_del\\_caballo\\_blanco](http://ecotourism.org/en/casa_del_caballo_blanco)
- CDCB and CASA will be represented at the Belize Tourism Expo (BETEX) in September by Ernie Garcia and Juan Carlos Orellana
- Corrections: the BWB visit was February 26, 2006, rather than 2005 as stated in last Newsletter: 'La Sala' is 1000 square foot meeting room, rather than "square floor."

## Montclair Veterinary Hospital Pet & Wildlife Fund to Provide Non-profit Umbrella

The Montclair Veterinary Hospital Pet and Wildlife Fund, a non-profit (501 (c) 3, sponsored by the Montclair Veterinary Hospital, has as part of their relationship to the Casa Avian Support Alliance (a certified Non-Governmental Organization in Belize), graciously offered to provide an “umbrella” relationship to CASA, which will enable CASA to function as a tax-exempt non-profit in the United States.

This will facilitate the receipt of donations, monetary and equipment, necessary to develop and maintain CASA.

## Dr. Deb visits CASA to Consult on Design

Dr. Debra Scheenstra, DVM, a graduate of the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine (1992), an active member of the Association of Avian Veterinarians since 1989, is a mainstay volunteer with Wild Care wildlife rehabilitation center in Marin County, Northern California, while pursuing her own ‘house call’ veterinary practice, and a member of the Board of Advisors of CASA.

Dr. Deb spent a week at CASA this past April dividing her time among consultation regarding the development of the Rehabilitation and Quarantine/Nursery – Evaluation Treatment buildings, and birding with CDCB guide Jaime Garcia, trips to Mayan archaeological sites, the annual Belize Agricultural Exposition, meeting and visiting the practices of local veterinarians, and round table discussion in the CDCB dining room.

CASA extends endless gratitude to Dr. Deb for sharing her knowledge of avian medicine and hours in the service of avian rehabilitation with CASA staff. Much of the material developed for the ‘Response to Comments’ document relied on editorial review and knowledge gleaned from discussions with Dr. Scheenstra. Gracias.

**“You have chosen a beautiful place to pursue a wonderful endeavor ...thanks for allowing us to share in the vision.” Dr. Debra, May 2006**

## Runaway Creek Nature Preserve—Mahogany Propagation Program

As reported in the previous newsletter, CASA has been a participant at planning sessions for the development of the Runaway Creek Nature Preserve. Among the projects identified in the Runaway Creek Preserve Strategic Plan is the propagation of mahogany seedlings found within the forests of the preserve.

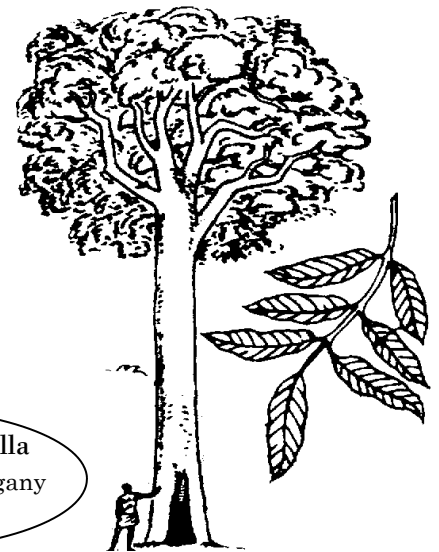
In April, CASA staff member Enrique Rivas, prepared a protocol describing the removal and planting recommendations for the seedlings that had been observed in the preserve.

Communication with Dr. Gil Boese, President of the Foundation for Wildlife Conservation Inc., indicates that CASA may be named among the facilities, for

example the Belize Botanical Gardens, that will receive seedlings and care for them until they reach a size that they can be permanently transplanted for continuing growth and maturation.

CASA, in turn, will receive a portion of the seedlings to augment the current reforestation efforts on the northern portion of the property.

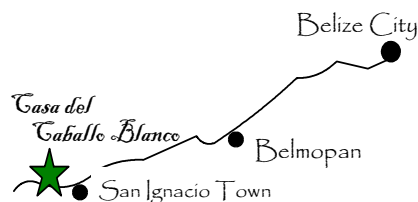
CASA welcomes this opportunity to assist Runaway Creek Nature Preserve and to further the efforts directed to reinforcement of the mahogany forests of Belize.



*Swietenia macrophylla*  
Big leaf or Belize Mahogany

## Where's CASA ?

The Casa Avian Support Alliance is situated on the grounds of Casa del Caballo Blanco. Modes of transportation, directions and maps to the lodge can be found at [www.casacaballoblanco.com](http://www.casacaballoblanco.com), select “Where's Casa?” and “How to Get Here,” and “Maps and Directions.”



Casa is approximately 1.3 miles west of San Ignacio on Bullet Tree Road, the road to Bullet Tree Falls

Questions? Call us at

707.974.4942

## CASA Donations 2nd Quarter

The following efforts to support those who support us were made in the 2nd qtr:

- 2 used laptop computers to Project Bird Watch for service in Indonesia
- A cash donation of \$100.00 to Wild Care in support of avian rehabilitation
- Use of the CDCB flatbed to assist Belize Forest Department to relocate confiscated poached lumber
- Cash donation of \$100 to MVHP&WF

## Birding Guide—Jaime David Garcia

Born in San Ignacio Town, Cayo, Mr. Garcia completed his studies locally, pursued an education in teaching at the Colegio Nacional de Educacion Profesional Tecnica in Mexico, which was followed by additional training at University of Belize. In 1993 he became interested in tourism and obtained his tour guide license.

Mr. Garcia has worked with the Belize Zoo, Program for Belize and Mayan Land Tours, where he worked as a birding guide, and has consulted with the identification of avian fauna and flora of Cahal Pech. In 1994, the World Wildlife Fund published "A Checklist of the Birds of Belize," of which Mr. Garcia was a co-author. If you are interested in night birding, which will include an overnight in the bush, Mr. Garcia is Casa's primary night birding guide.



Jaime Garcia, one of Casa del Caballo's premier birding guides, relaxes in La Sala before an evening birding trip to El Pilar on the Guatemalan Border

Photograph: Gladys Rivas

## WildCare - a Model and Mentor for CASA

On June 7, 2006 the principal sponsors of CASA visited WildCare Terwilliger Nature Education and Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in San Rafael, California. The mission and goals of Wild Care are those of CASA and the visit to the WildCare Center provided an opportunity to tour the facilities and view firsthand the methods and approaches to managing patients, time, and paper:

It seems that there is a common question regarding rehabilitation facilities "Why do we need them?" The answer from WildCare is "Negative interaction with people caused the need to interact". As noted by Karen Wilson, Executive Director, "...humans are still the primary cause for injuries to wildlife." For example, a bird struck by a car, a sling shot, a collision with a power line, needs time and help for it to heal. WildCare offers care and a safe haven for wildlife in the North Bay.

Through active outreach in the surrounding communities, education and field classes for the local school children, and charity balls to raise much needed funds, WildCare continues a 31 year tradition of efforts to conserve biodiversity. A fundamental message common to the WildCare programs, is that all animals are affected when their habitats are lost or people impose upon those habitats. An essential understanding derived from these programs is that each of us will make a contribution to the environment, and that we will share those contributions—or impacts—with wildlife in the future, and thus we are all stewards of the future.

CASA sponsors will continue to work closely with WildCare to develop protocols, volunteer and community outreach programs, that will guide and assist the long term goals of CASA. It is the hope of CASA that WildCare experts will visit the site in 2006 and working alongside the Forest Department of Belize, create a professional, efficient, and much needed facility in Belize.

We thank the following individuals at WildCare for their time and endless effort in recognizing what we at CASA feel in our hearts: Karen Wilson, Melanie Piazza, and Alison Hermance, and the entire staff of WildCare.

"Birds are the farmers of the world, help us to help them to continue to sow their seeds"

## Wildlife Biologists Return in July to Continue Observations

Wendy Dexter and Jeff Alvarez will return in July to continue their observations of the reforestation area on the north facing slope of the property. Observations will be conducted at the eight points selected during the January visit and marked in February. The early wet season has resulted in significant growth and flocks of parrots are now frequenting the property. The long term goal of the study is to determine the effectiveness of reforestation as a means to encouraging repopulation of area by the avian forest community.

## CDCB Participates in BTIA Workshop

On July 12 and 13 the Belize Tourism Industry Association, in collaboration with Programme for Belize, the Rain Forest Alliance, and Conservation International conducted a "Tour Operators Best Management Practices Workshop" in Belize City. The primary focus of the workshop was to promote the development and implementation of environmental management systems within tour operations and to encourage other tour operators to do the same.

Ernesto Garcia, Daily Operations Manager for Casa del Caballo Blanco, and the acting Casa Avian Support Alliance Manager, attended both days of the workshop and he is presently sharing with staff many of the measures and procedures presented and discussed during the workshop.

Casa del Caballo Blanco, host to Casa Avian Support Alliance, was recognized during the workshop as the only lodge in Belize currently listed on the Rain Forest Alliance Eco-tourism Index.

CDCB and CASA support sustainable tourism through active participation and the education of our guests. A booklet can be found in each cabana at CDCB that describes our efforts to promote eco-friendly tourism and provides tips to guests to assist in those efforts.

# Casa Avian Support Alliance

Birds are the farmers of the world - help us to help them to continue to sow their seeds

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*Hola, Greetings from Gringo the namesake of Casa del Caballo Blanco, we are working on a CASA web page, in the mean time visit us at [www.casacaballoblanco.com](http://www.casacaballoblanco.com)*

Jodi



MEMBERSHIP—The Board of Directors for the Casa Avian Support Alliance (CASA) recognizes the value of interested individuals and organizations (both profit and non-profit), as a means to promote the goals of the organization. Memberships are not viewed as a primary source of income with respect to the sustainability of the NGO, but rather as a means to share the mission, goals and accomplishments of CASA with a broader public. Revenues captured from annual dues will be used primarily to support member related activities such as the Badge of Bird Program and the Quarterly Report to Members.

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

REGULAR	Membership Description	BZE	US
Student or Sr. Citizen	Currently enrolled or graduated in last two -years	\$5	\$15
Individual	Individual on card plus one other	\$10	\$30
Family	Two or more	\$25	\$50
Participating Professional	Designed primarily for Veterinarians, Ornithologists, and Biologists involved in CASA's programs	\$30	\$60
SUPPORTING			
Affiliate	Members wishing recognition for affiliation	\$100	\$100
Advocate	Members that actively advocate the mission and goals of CASA	\$250	\$250
Patron	Members who wish to contribute to specific programs underway at CASA	\$500	\$500
Benefactor	Individuals who wish to support and promote the mission and goals of CASA	\$1000	\$1000
Guardian	Lifetime membership	\$2500	\$2500
Non-Profit Organization	Organizations with sympathetic missions and goals that would like to support and identify with CASA	\$250	\$250
For-Profit Enterprises	Enterprises who wish to support the mission and goals of CASA and be recognized for the contribution	\$250	\$250

The benefits of membership at the various levels are as follows:

All Regular Memberships receive a membership card, are invited to the annual meeting, receive a quarterly report, are enrolled in the "Passport Program," are listed in the membership directory, have the right to vote on issues put before the membership, and receive 10% discount on items offered in the gift shop.

Supporting Memberships receive the same benefits listed above and are recognized in the annual report for their contribution to the programs and activities of CASA